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My Reception at Pikerni.

[Frontispiece.]

The Sorrows of Epirus

: : : *By René Puaux* : : :

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO WHOM
IT MAY COME

ILLUSTRATIONS.

My Reception at Pikerni.	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Argyrocastro. " Long live Greece ! Long live France "	<i>Facing p .68</i>
Near the Musina Pass	<i>" " 76</i>
Argyrocastro. General view	<i>" " 80</i>

One thousand copies printed for Monsieur Augustino.

THE SORROWS OF EPIRUS

THE RETURN OF THE EPIROTES

Corfu, 1st May, 1913.

YESTERDAY, April 30th, the last of the Epirotes left Corfu for their coast villages, from which they were driven during the Albanian "fury" last November.

Ten thousand of them had then flocked to this blissful island, whose roses and orange trees make it an earthly paradise at this season of the year. The circumstances of the Epirote exodus had been utterly deplorable. The Turks and Albanians had burnt their homes over their heads, and it was only the devotion of their Greek brethren of Corfu, and, indeed, of all Greece, which saved them

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from utter despair. The municipality, the central Government and private individuals had alike come to their assistance. A subsistence allowance of fifty centimes a day was made to them, and they lived as best they could.

Then came the capture of Yanina, followed by that of Argyrocastro and Delvino. From that moment a great hope raised their sunken spirits. Greece was born again.

Under the ægis of the blue and white flag they were enabled to return to their villages, Parga, Senitza, Nivitza. (There are about twenty-five of them scattered along the coast opposite Corfu, and all had been abandoned by the Epirote peasants owing to the Albanian menace.) The victory of the Crown Prince gave them back their homes, once and for all, they thought, delivered from the terrors of the past.

I watched the last of these exiles coming on shore at Santi Quaranta. The little

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port, which usually sleeps soundly enough in the damp heat at the foot of its olive-crowned hills, presented a scene of the greatest animation. Donkeys and mules in hundreds wound up the white road to Delvino and Argyrocastro with loads of food for the troops and the civil population. Houses, disembowelled by the bombardment, were now being stuffed with sacks of wheat, and the walls of the ancient Byzantine city of Onchesmos swarmed with workmen and porters. This world had for the time being shaken off its habitual torpor. It really seemed that a great vision, the Hellenic vision, possessed them. The long nightmare was over. The Epirotes were about to realize the dream of generations, union with Greece, their fatherland by history and sympathy.

They could not bring themselves to believe that they would be joined to an artificial Albania, alien to them in tongue, civilization and religion. All these people,

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from Cape St. Vasilio to Cape St. Joannis, were Greeks, and every man to whom I spoke, related to Greek families in Corfu, Patras and Athens, refused to have any doubts as to the decision of Europe. They returned to Epirus confident of the triumph of a cause for which they had endured so much.

HELLENIC NATIONAL SENTIMENT IN EPIRUS

Corfu, 2nd May.

IF the real meaning of the question of Epirus is to be grasped, a preliminary axiom must be accepted: it is not the Greek Government which wants to annex Epirus, but the Epirotes themselves who claim reunion with Greece.

The opponents of this reunion, in their academic desire to draw a satisfactory map of Albania, never seem to have given a single thought to this side of the question, which is none the less a vital one. Some have seen in the Greek Empire a danger for Italian naval power. They have suggested that, by extending that Empire to the north of Corfu, it would enable Greece to transform the Corfu

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Channel into a closed sound in which the Russian, French and English fleets could shelter in case of an international conflict and threaten Italy in the Adriatic.

This is to forget that the Adriatic only begins at the Straits of Otranto, and that the coast of Epirus, whether in Greek or Albanian hands, is only about two kilometres distant from the northern end of Corfu, so that a few mines could make it an impregnable lair for the fleets whose highly problematical schemes Rome appears to dread so much. Besides, so long as Greece remained friendly to the Entente she could place so many excellent harbours in the Ionian Islands at the disposal of the Allied fleets that it is really rather absurd to see opposition based on such slight grounds.

The other opponents of the reunion of Epirus with Greece—and these, too, are to be found in Italy—seem to have retained, of the treaty of 1897 which settled the boundaries of the Austrian

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and Italian zones of influence in Albania and Epirus, only the hopes of an eventual conquest of the whole eastern shore of the Adriatic. By thus refusing to recognize existing facts and persisting in the creation of an artificial kingdom of Albania, whose endless unrest would furnish the excuse for future intervention and possible annexation, they show that the Marquis di San Giuliano's imperialism has still some fervent devotees.

If Epirus were a *res nullius*, a piece of territory without a national soul which any conqueror could automatically make his own, the Italian policy might be regarded as not incomprehensible. But the truth is quite otherwise. The districts of Epirus which Rome wishes to see drawn into the future Albania are the hotbed of uncompromising Hellenism. "They are more Greek than Greece herself," one of the most eminent professors of Athens University once said to me, and it is certainly the fact that the attach-

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ment of the Epirotes to the national cause has been displayed in the most striking fashion for years.

There are in Epirus six great centres of Hellenism: Yanina, Zagoria, Argyrocastro, Metzovo, Khimara and Koritza. From each of these centres have gone forth men whose first thought, when once they had made their fortune in a foreign land, has been to contribute towards the realization of the national dream, the union of Epirus with Greece.

M. Arsakis, the founder of the great girls' college at Athens, which has two thousand pupils and is the only centre of feminine education in the East, comes from Chotachova, a village near Argyrocastro. M. Zapas, another founder of schools and the Athens picture-gallery, is a native of Lambovo, likewise near Argyrocastro. M. Zographo, yet another founder of schools, hails from Kestorati, near Tepeleni.

MM. Averov and Stournaras, the

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first a Greek benefactor of universal repute, the second the founder of the Athens polytechnic school, are both natives of Metzovo. MM. Zozimas, Kaplani and Tositza hail from Yanina, M. Banca from Koritza. There are hundreds of other less notable Epirotes who have bequeathed by will to the Greek Government sums, the total amounting to a considerable figure, for the advancement of the sacred cause.

The reunion of Epirus with Greece is the single thought. Deposited with the Athens banks are funds the interest of which has been accumulating for years by virtue of a testamentary disposition which is always the same: "This money, in case of a war of independence, is to be used for the liberation of Epirus."

What proofs of the necessity of an Epiro-Albanian *bloc* can avail against such overwhelming manifestations of uncompromising national feeling? Is it suggested that because Ali Pasha exter-

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minated a large number of orthodox families, he destroyed the idea? There are Mussulman families of these districts to-day with a living *Christian* grandmother. The villages still have their Greek names, such as Progonatis and Oxatis, which recall the heroes and exploits of the past. At Argyrocastro there are girls of Mussulman families who go to Greek schools and Mussulman Albanians who, moved by an all-powerful atavism, make the sign of the cross when they pass a Greek church.

The past and the present are here united in support of a cause which has sound history and practical politics behind it.

CORFU

Corfu, May 3rd.

THE midday swelter. An English cruiser, the *Media*, was sleeping at anchor in the harbour. Two little Greek steamers, which had come that morning from Patras, were busy coaling. The quays, with no more shade than a few thin shrubs could give them, were deserted. In the town green blinds were drawn over the white and yellow façades, and ragamuffins, naked as the sun, snoozed in shady alleys. The Maltese cabbies, leaving their skinny little nags under the plane trees of the Citadel, were playing cards in one of the cafés next to three Turkish officer prisoners, who silently sipped their Turkish coffee like so many

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pensioners whose drinks are their sole daily distraction.

At first sight, Corfu is no more picturesque than any other of these Mediterranean towns where the sun at midday is so overpowering that the *far niente* is imperative. Tall houses in the Neapolitan style, narrow arcaded streets stacked with fruit stalls (the smell of the fruit somewhat spoilt by the stench of a stream hard by!), shops for cheap cigarettes and picture postcards, barbers, popular confectioners haunted by millions of flies—these and the dust which buries men and things alike and turns every bit of green to grey, are the replica of our own Provence in summer.

Enchantment begins as soon as you leave the town behind you. You enter a land of huge copses of wild roses invading the roads—marvels of colour and scent—orange trees a blaze of blossom, irises, broom, clematis peering out through the high grass and among tall olive trees,

Corfu

gnarled, knotted and hollow. Then, as soon as you get to the top of one of the hills near by, you realize the striking charms of this Queen of the Ionian Islands, you see why d'Annunzio came here to write "Fire," the Empress Elizabeth to seek elusive oblivion, and King George of Greece to find a haven where he was no longer preoccupied with the burden of power. Corfu is one great garden, and, to my mind, Ceylon is its only rival. The little villages, clinging to the slopes of the mountains, are enveloped in a green mantle, that wonderful mantle which sweeps to the sea and conceals the outline of the golden sands. The olive trees form a sparkling vault over the winding pink roads, and as far as the eye can reach stretches a great expanse of green capped by the dark cones of the Mediterranean cypresses. King George knew the spirit of Corfu, and was careful to avoid violating it in his villa, "My Rest," which he be-

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queathed to his son, Andrew. The German Emperor, who succeeded to the Achilleion by purchase from the Empress Elizabeth, was not so squeamish.

If the site is good, overlooking as it does the whole Corfu Channel, the style of this imperial residence does not reflect much credit on the Neapolitan architect who built it. It is not difficult to understand why the German attendant forbids the carrying of cameras. No doubt he is afraid that photographs might be taken, which might lead to an entrenchment on his monopoly of picture postcards. Above his lodge door hangs a board with specimens, and the legend: *Ansichts Karten hier zu haben*. Admittance formerly cost only one drachma (franc), but to-day the figure 2 in ink replaces the original printed figure on the entrance ticket. I am reluctant to think this is due to a smart idea of William II. What is undoubtedly a personal touch of him is the enormous bronze statue of Achilles,

Corfu

in the Munich style, at the end of the terrace. In the Empress Elizabeth's time the "Wounded Achilles," in white marble, now relegated to the middle of a too small grove, was there. The perspective of the terrace is now ruined by this colossal statue, which from the waist upwards rises above the trees and seems to call for a searchlight inside the helmet, like Bartholdi's "Liberty." By way of contrast, a charming statuette, with the words (in English) "A Coming Sailor" on the pedestal, had been taken down and put away in a cellar. It showed a small boy in a fisherman's cap, seated in the bows of a boat.

A certain mystery surrounds this decision. It is said that the figure resembled the ill-fated Archduke Rudolph, and that Elizabeth loved the little statue because it reminded her of the childhood, so rich in promise, of the son of which the tragedy of Meyerling robbed her. Did William II. dislike these memories? Probably he did,

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for the pedestal stands lonely to-day, as does that of Heinrich Heine.

Taken as a whole, the Achilleion, with its garden overloaded with statues of very varying merit and its horrible interior decoration, is not up to its reputation. The Kaiser has spent a million francs on it, but it did not cost the Austrian Empress more than a quarter of that sum. It has been all wasted, if beauty is to be taken as the test of success.

Nature is so lavish that the faults of the Achilleion are soon forgotten, and when, at the soothing hour of twilight, one looks from Pontikonissi across to the Island of Ulysses, from which Boecklin is said to have taken his "Toteninsel" (though it was from a photograph, as he never visited Corfu), but which more suggests the ideal refuge of tranquil joys, one experiences an involuntary clutching of the heart. Before this serene and unruffled beauty the gravity of the present political crisis vanishes. The

Corfu

nuns of the Convent of Saint Theodora, in their endeavour to shut out the world from their lovely monastic garden, kept closed the door in their wall on which Napoleon's Piedmontese soldiery in 1810 scribbled sketches of fashionable ladies with sweeping plumes, and inscribed one of them *Nominata la Bella Amora*, adding a few rude remarks. In the same way it is impossible to have more than a chance ear here for the lugubrious rumours which come from the West and the Adriatic. The coast of Epirus hard by is forgotten in the sweet solitude of this enormous and superb garden, a jewel set in the blue waters of the Ionian Sea.

Yet, in the end, the sense of reality resumed its sway. Here in the ancient Venetian fortress there were 2,500 Turkish prisoners, rolling cigarettes, fishing or dreaming of the Bosphorus, in the shade of the fig trees which sweep from the hills to the sea, and here again a heart-rending vision was an unhappy refugee

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from Epirus who had lost her wits, having seen her son murdered by Albanians before her eyes. In her solitude, she seemed to have recovered her balance a little, for the Corfiotes had received her as a poor sister in mourning. Then terror seized her soul again, and it was necessary for policemen to tie her arms and remove her forcibly. She passed before me thus. Her staring eyes seemed to be seeing the horrible drama again, and uttering low moans like a stricken animal, she crouched to the earth and offered resistance as if she expected momentarily a similar fate.

It was then that all the tales I had heard of sorrow-laden Epirus came back to my mind, and a flood of pity filled my heart.

* * * * *

Night had now fallen. The chimes from a neighbouring church tower had just announced eleven o'clock. In the

Corfu

St. George Square the restaurant keepers were taking in the chairs. From a distant piano came the strains of the duet from *Tosca*. Corfu, island of delight, settled herself for sleep, while across there, on the far side of the channel, the peasants of Nivitza, Lukovo and Pikerni were encamped, trembling and apprehensive, in the ruins of their dwellings which the Albanians had burnt.

SANTI QUARANTA

Santi Quaranta, May 4th.

THE *Zatuna*, which can do her seven knots, took two hours and a quarter to go from Corfu to Santi Quaranta, which I visited a week ago. The harbour showed the same scene of animation as before : the convoys of mules and muscular little Epirus horses were climbing the hill laden with packages and sacks destined for the interior. Santi Quaranta is really the principal port, in a sense the only port—for the more southern roadstead of Preveza does not admit large vessels—of all southern Epirus, with its important centres, such as Argyrocastro, Delvina and even Yanina.

In one month the Customs at Santi Quaranta did business to the tune of

Santi Quaranta

70,000 francs, and this did not include all the supplies of the Greek army.

Abdul Hamid was himself the owner of this port and the neighbouring districts. The Greeks—only Greeks inhabited Santi Quaranta, to the exclusion of all Mussulmans, with the exception of a few Treasury officials—were the Sultan's tenants. The Young Turk Revolution turned Santi Quaranta into State property. The revenues no longer went to the Sovereign's private purse, but the Greek inhabitants continued to pay their rents to the Ottoman Government. When war broke out the Greeks landed a few troops—about a thousand—here, to support their operations against Yanina, but this effort was insufficient. The Turkish forces, swollen by Albanian contingents, compelled them to re-embark, and it was only on March 3rd, 1913, at the moment when the main Greek army entered Yanina, that a short bombardment put to flight the last Turkish troops.

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On the previous night the heavens had joined hands with the Greeks. There were at Santi Quaranta, near the old Byzantine walls, a store of 8,000 cans of petrol. The commander of the Turkish detachment had just given orders to load them all up on mules. "They will be useful," he said, "for setting fire to the Christian villages up country." A storm burst. The depot was struck by lightning and an enormous fire caused, which was easily visible from Corfu.

I was told this story in the old town hall as I was taking coffee with the Commandant. When I came out to look for the horses which were to take me up country I found a surprise in store for me. The entire population of Santi Quaranta was massed before the house, on which the Greek flag floated. They had learned of the presence of a Frenchman, and as all the French are Philhellenes, a mighty shout arose: "Zito Hellas! Zito Gallia! Zito Enosis!" ("Long live Greece!

Santi Quaranta

Long live France ! Long live the Union ! ”)

When I realized that I and no other was the subject of this demonstration I admit I was somewhat taken aback. I could only bow, being quite at a loss to know what to reply to these good people, who considered me, it appeared, a kind of omnipotent being, who was going to testify before Europe to their Greek patriotism and whose testimony would be enough to assure the realization of their dream of the reunion of Epirus with the Greek mother-country. I experienced a feeling of poignant sorrow at my inability to confirm the good news and my enforced silence.

NIVITZA

I THOUGHT that Santi Quaranta would be my first and last experience of popularity, but as a matter of fact it was nothing to my reception at Nivitza, which will always be one of those memories which neither advancing age nor the vicissitudes of life can efface. We had been riding for three hours over green meadows clad in a beautiful spring mantle, for those who cruise along this coast of Epirus, with its steep, barren hills falling to the sea, do not suspect that behind this barrier lie glorious hidden valleys, which Turko-Albanian tyranny and barbarism have alone prevented from becoming a cultivated paradise. My small horse had nearly thrown me head-first into the bed of a stream with steep banks, but I was

Nivitza

in high good humour and at peace with the world.

We had just struggled painfully by problematical goat-tracks up the sides of a high hill whence the serried rows of houses in the large village of Nivitza could be seen in the distance, when, in the middle of a small olive wood, two hundred metres from the first houses, an unwonted sight made me draw rein, A deputation from the inhabitants was there, and in the middle of a group of twenty little girls, armed with immense bouquets of wild flowers, were three small boys, brandishing two Greek flags and a French one. I dismounted, while an old man, with long white whiskers, came forward. In his hand, which trembled visibly, he held a piece of paper on which his speech was written, a moving speech, which treated of France, protectress of the weak and defender of the Right, and proclaimed that the unhappy inhabitants of Nivitza would rather die than not be Greek. The orator

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ended with a threefold cheer for Greece, France, and the union of Epirus with the mother-country.

Everyone joined in, and hats flew gaily into the air, while the girls made a circle round me. They offered me their bouquets with such an effect of spontaneity that I wanted to take them all. Some of them were very large, made in the form of a cross—the Christian cross. Others were quite small, and for all ornament had a rose tied by a brown thread to a bunch of *piganos*—an exquisitely scented grass. The little girls kissed my hand and pressed it against their foreheads while giving me their flowers. These were so numerous that I was able to decorate the pommel of my saddle, my horse's mane, my hat and my pockets, and it was thus literally laden with flowers that I entered Nivitza. A procession had been formed, single file in view of the narrowness of the street, and the Greek and French flags led the way. Then the two bells of the church

Nivitza

began to ring. From their doorsteps the women welcomed me with the orthodox greeting, "Christ is risen." As we entered the village a little urchin came up to me and emptied full-blown roses into a red and black handkerchief, while the bells pealed with all their might.

Then I realized the horror of the situation. The village of Nivitza, which once counted 160 houses, was no more than a heap of ruins. On the evening of the previous 13th December the Albanians had set fire to most of the houses, which their occupants had hastily deserted at their approach. Five helpless old women and two men remained behind to be burned to death. One of the children who stayed behind with them was murdered in the very room in which I am writing.

Everything was looted or destroyed, while the inhabitants, crossing the mountains, reached the coast, where Greek ships were waiting for them. For three

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months they stayed at Corfu, in the care of the Government, and when the country was cleared of Turks, after the capture of Yanina, home-sickness overwhelmed them, and they returned to find only ruins. Roofs were laid over such walls as were still standing, and they took up their abode in hopes of a better future, that future being union with Greece. Here they were, treating me as its herald and harbinger !

This day, according to the Greek calendar, was the Sunday of St. Thomas, the Apostle who would not believe without seeing. I have seen and I believe that it is impossible to refuse final emancipation to a people whom centuries of evil tyranny have not succeeded in robbing of their hope. I put the flowers given me by the maidens of Nivitza in the recess for the holy ikons in my bedroom. Looking at them while I wrote on my bag by the light of an evil lamp, their frank children's smile obsessed my mind. This

Nivitza

new generation, on whom the mantle of sorrow has not yet fallen, *must* be spared a renewal of the ancient torture. This depended on the action of six diplomatists seated round a table in London.

Nivitza, May 5th.

Coming out of my room this morning (the insects left by the Albanians had in no wise spared me), I found the modest porch decorated with flowers and hung with Greek and French flags. The inhabitants were waiting for me and I was conducted on a tour of the ruins, a lamentable sight which is full of poignant memories for these poor villagers. "It was just here I found my mother's body," said one, showing me a heap of grey ashes amidst a litter of blackened stuffs. "Here's where my uncle was killed," said another, indicating a shrub before the porch which the fire had destroyed. They all wanted to show me their ruined houses, as if a

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French visitor were the emanation of some divine justice which could restore all they had lost. I had to abbreviate my visit, for I had to see other villages which, so I was assured, had suffered the same fate. A last farewell and the party was off for St. Basil, on the slopes of the hills where the ferns flourish in the shade of the olive trees. All this country casts the spell of the most soothing of the beatitudes. But it is none the less a land of terror and mourning.

ST. BASIL

WE dropped into the shadow of a valley, in the midst of whose grassy carpet slept a village hidden away like a medieval monastery. Here again we had the ceremony of the Greek and French flags, and the inhabitants with their hands full of flowers. Whilst some worthy was reading me a little speech of welcome I looked at my national emblem : it was the same I had seen at Nivitza. These poor folk had only one, which they had made as best they could and were now handing on from village to village. As soon as I left one place a lad ran with all his might by short cuts to carry our colours to those who were waiting for us further on. It was otherwise with the Greek flags, for each village had two or

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three. There was no necessity to improve these at the last moment. They were to be found, even in the days of Turkish rule, at the bottom of some drawer. I was the first Frenchman, and even the first Westerner, who had ever been seen in these mountain villages, and yet everyone knew the name of France, to which all beneficent and liberal virtues were credited.

St. Basil had been wrecked like Nivitza. In the church, to which I was taken, the Albanians had slashed out the eyes of all the ikons with their knives, smashed the crude crucifix of painted wood, and stolen the few modest pieces of plate. I made the round of the ruins, and while the old women wept, the children offered me bouquets of wild flowers. Even quite tiny babies in their mothers' arms clasped pieces of fern in their fascinating little hands. There was such an atmosphere of spontaneous giving among them—a kind of fetichism of hope triumphant—

St. Basil

and I read such grief in the eyes of the girls whom I left without accepting their flowers that I dismounted and received the whole lot in the basket of my two arms. Poor folk ! The “ elder ” who delivered the speech when I entered the village had declared : “ We have lost everything, but once we have the Greek flag we shall begin to live.”

LUKOVO

NOW we return to the sea. Even from a distance Lukovo stands on a promontory in a position not less fine than that of Sorrento. All the villagers had come out to line the route, and there was even a police force, consisting of a sergeant and two Greek soldiers, to control operations. The village teacher delivered a speech. His voice quivered with legitimate emotion, for he had only escaped death by a miracle. His companion, the priest, whom the Albanians had compelled to serve—like himself—as guide, was killed, and it was by great good fortune that he slipped away into the woods. They showed me the adjacent graves of the priest and the vicar of Argyrocastro. They are by the roadside, and crosses

Lukovo

made of wild flowers, the only legacy of Nature to the disinherited, mark the spot where the victims of Albanian fanaticism gave up their lives.

Lukovo, like Nivitza, St. Basil and Hondetzovo, whose burnt-out houses I have seen through my glasses, offered a spectacle of utter ruin, and while I pressed in my arms the bouquets of orange-blossom, asphodel and roses, I had to listen to further stories of atrocities.

PIKERNI

THE mountain road from Lukovo to Pikerni was impracticable at this time, and so we had to descend by an Alpine track to the shore, which we followed as far as the fishermen's huts. The French visitor had been expected above, and this move upset plans. However, our standard-bearers, who had come with us from Lukovo, did a little desperate signalling, and lo and behold! from the mountain a procession began to descend with more flags and flowers, while all the church bells pealed in chorus. The sound came clear to us through the limpid air of a sunny May day. It was something between the carillon of Easter Day and the warning note of the tocsin, a blend

Pikerni

of piety and apprehension. The leaders of the cortège came up, and while a local worthy led off with the "Zito-Gallia," the inhabitants of Pikerni swarmed down the hillside like ants in the grass. "We have nothing left now, but we will die rather than not be Greek," the worthy said, with fire in his voice, and while a man waved a great cross of flowers the rapidly expanding crowd broke out with cheers for Greece and "Union." But it was getting late, and it was time to embark if we were to reach Khimara before nightfall. There was a lively dispute as to who were to have the honour of carrying the French guest on their shoulders to the boat, which was dancing on the waves. As we pushed off all those present sang the Greek national anthem with bared heads. While the children, still bearing the Greek and French flags, ran as far as the rocks of the promontory we were to pass and the men on the shore shouted "Zito Gallia!" two hundred metres above, the

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women of Pikerni, massed on the headland in dark groups which were distinguishable without glasses, watched the *Zatuna* disappear. The bells sounded ever fainter as evening fell.

A CENTRE OF HELLENISM: KHIMARA

Khimara, May 8th.

AT Khimara the atmosphere of pleading apprehension which had impressed me so profoundly in the other villages was conspicuous by its absence. The Khimariotes have never suffered from the Turco-Albanian yoke because they have always treated it lightly. For centuries they have formed a State within a State. They formed an autonomous Greek colony to which the Turkish Government had to dip its flag, and if the district of Khimara, with its seven villages, Khimara, Kiparo, Vuno, Drymades, Palassa, Pileri and Kuvesi, and its population of 20,000 souls, paid a tribute of 16,000 francs a year to the Sublime Porte,

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the latter accepted it gratefully if only because it knew perfectly well that if it asked for more it would get nothing at all. For three reasons the Khimariotes, *de facto* Greeks for many a year already, had no anxiety for the future. If European diplomacy proposed to incorporate them with the kingdom of Essad Pasha, Ismaïl Kemal or any other fancy Albanian potentate, they would merely maintain their long - established independence. Where the Turkish Empire had failed to get its decrees enforced it was extremely unlikely that the King of Scutari would succeed.

This is no place to relate the history of Khimara since the fifteenth century, when the Khimariotes formed a *corps d'élite*, with a blue and white standard, the Greek colours, in the forces of George Castriotis in his struggle with the Sultans.

Khimara was then twice its present size. Ali Pasha, by his policy of extermination and intimidation, succeeded in

A Centre of Hellenism : Khimara

converting a number of villages on the far side of the mountains to Islam, though the district formed a separate Greek episcopate until 1833. Even now the warlike reputation of the Khimariotes (their fame as shots is as great as that of the Swiss) has preserved for them the privilege of bearing arms, freedom from direct taxation, tobacco and customs duties.

They govern themselves on the primitive system of *demogeronties* (the People's Senate), the eight village "Elders" administering justice and regulating the affairs of the commune. The affairs of the district are dealt with in a joint session of the *demogeronties* at the village of Khimara. This patriarchal machinery is quite sufficient to ensure stability and keep order.

Latterly the Turkish Government, which had never had even a representative in the district, had considered it appropriate to send someone, and there appeared

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a *Kaïmakam*, a *hoja*, a judge, a *procurateur*, two secretaries, a few policemen and two telegraphists. These officials, lodged in two buildings specially erected for them at the end of the village, made themselves at home among the inhabitants, who had little difficulty in accommodating themselves to their presence since it was not irksome. Kept in check by the obviously uncompromising attitude of the Khimariotes, these Turkish representatives kept within doors and contented themselves with scratching busily on paper and denouncing to Constantinople the Philhellene sentiments of their charges. From time to time an order would come to imprison someone, but in view of the impossibility of carrying it out, the unhappy *Kaïmakam* referred the matter to Yanina, and it usually rested there.

The Khimariotes exhibited complete indifference towards Turkish authority. Abroad they enrolled themselves at the Greek consulates. Some of them were

A Centre of Hellenism : Khimara

Greek officers, and, none the less, returned to Khimara to visit their homes. Their situation was obviously difficult, for a state of continuous insubordination has its dangers. Thus, when it was decided to call up Christians in the Turkish Army, seven hundred young Khimariotes preferred exile (many of them came to France, notably to our metallurgical works at St. Etienne) to playing hide and seek with the Turkish authorities. All of them returned at once to join the Greek army when war was declared.

When the Young Turk régime followed, there was a change in tactics, but the situation remained the same. The new *Kaïmakam* tried to divorce the Khimariotes from their Philhellenism by dangling before their eyes the advantages of a union with Ismaïl Kemal and the Albanians against the Sublime Porte. This manoeuvre was unsuccessful. The Khimariotes lent a ready ear to the words of one of their countrymen, a retired Greek

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officer named Spiro Spiromilio, the Venizelos of these Cretans of Epirus. There could be only one political faith for Khimara: union with Greece. Any other combination was impossible. Was it to further the interested intrigues of the Albano-Turkish *Kaïmakam* that so many Khimariotes went to make their fortunes in Russia or Egypt and left hundreds of thousands of francs to the Greek Church and schools of Khimara?

Early in October, 1912, the *Kaïmakam* announced through the medium of M. Andreas Dimas, who acted as intermediary between the people and the Turkish authorities, that the Government was calling all the subjects of the Ottoman Empire to the colours. This communication, the only reply to which was universal indifference, confirmed the Khimariotes in their belief that war was near, for on this side of Epirus news is rare and hard to come by, and, further, the Turkish

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telegraphist issued none of the information he received from Yanina. Khimara was in a state of high excitement. Bandoliers were rubbed up, and everyone waited. At six o'clock on the evening of the 18th, the telegraph clerk issued the announcement of the declaration of war which had just come to hand. On the 19th the news was official. Then from the mountains there descended the few scattered Turkish policemen and officials to foregather in what the Khimara Greeks called the *Castello*, to wit the two buildings at the end of the village. The whole assembly mustered some forty persons. For a whole month Khimara waited expectant while the war raged in Thrace, Macedonia, Southern Epirus. Every day three Turks came to buy vegetables in the market, and then returned to the *Castello*, where the rest of the party lived like hermits.

All this time the Khimariotes kept their eyes fixed on Corfu across the water,

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for when John Spiromilio returned to Khimara on November 6th he had announced that his brother was engaged on a project, though he himself knew neither the significance nor the date thereof.

At eight o'clock in the morning of November 18th, John Spiromilio, still asleep (in the same room in which I made these notes), was awakened by shouting. His wife jumped from bed, and, throwing up the window, learned from a neighbour that boats had appeared, and a gun had been fired. John Spiromilio rushed to the balcony of his room, from which a magnificent view of the whole roadstead could be obtained, and saw three gunboats—what the Greeks call *Potamos*—in the southern channel. The whole village was astir, and people were cheering uproariously as they made in droves for the beach. Meanwhile, there was consternation in the Turkish camp. M. Andreas Dimas had presented himself, with two old men. One of the Turks

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who happened to be on the neighbouring St. Theodore hill, had come to give the alarm. The Sultan's forty servants then issued from the *Castello* and debated as to the most convenient direction for flight. M. Dimas reassured them, especially the magistrate's secretary, who was in tears. "The Greeks won't hurt you," he said. After half an hour, a smart fusillade was heard. In accordance with the custom of this country, public rejoicing was being celebrated by salvos. (I had had personal experience of this practice the day before. While I was attempting an afternoon nap, some twenty patriots, who, on hearing of my arrival, had come down from their mountains, whither they had fled at the news of an Albanian attack, assembled under my window and let off their rifles.) The cause of the enthusiasm was the arrival of two hundred Cretan and Epirote volunteers under M. Spiromilio.

The Turks hastily retired to one of

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the buildings of the *Castello* (which was being used as a Greek barracks when I wrote). The two telegraph clerks alone offered any resistance and fired on the new-comers. The Turkish gendarmes and officials only surrendered to a detachment of Greek regulars represented by a naval officer and a few sailors who were hastily summoned from the beach for this express purpose. The Sultan's phantom authority, after several years of fruitless struggle, had ceased to exist at Khimara. The gendarmes, the three judges, the magistrate, the ecclesiastic and his secretary, the treasurer and *his* secretary, one of the telegraphists (the other had been killed), the customs official (?) and the doctor were duly shipped for Corfu. As for the *Kaïmakam*, he had vanished a fortnight before.

The task was not yet concluded. The Albanian villages, seeing the failure of the first Greek attacks on Yanina, took

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heart. They felt pretty sure they would never be reached. On December 1st there was fighting at Pylori, on the 3rd, at Logara, on February 9th, at Pylori again. In the first engagement the Greeks had 7 killed and 5 wounded, in the second, 5 killed and 2 wounded, in the third, 2 killed and 12 wounded. The Turkish losses were not known. The accounts of battles, especially on the shores of the Mediterranean, are conspicuous for cheerful exaggeration as to numbers. "We were 350 against 3,500!" they told me, sipping Turkish coffee. Not being the Xenophon of this epic, I want to remember only two of the many incidents of which I heard. For the last of the actions in question, that of February 9th, the Turkish regulars had dispatched 500 men with two guns. Of these, the mule bearing one fell down a precipice, while the other was stolen by Albanians in a village where the Turkish detachment had halted. The

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burgling instinct had been stronger than martial ardour !

When this same action was in progress, only three persons remained at Khimara. All the others, women and children too, were with the troops in the mountains, the women being used to carry ammunition.

To-day there were 2,000 regulars in the district, and behind them the whole mass of volunteers, for all the men, without distinction of age, bear arms.

When I questioned an old *palikari*—wearing his *fustanella*, the short, white, pleated skirt which is the national costume—he replied : “ I am sixty-five, and I want to live to see us united with Greece. Meanwhile, I keep my rifle ! ” and he handed me a Mannlicher with the caution : “ It’s loaded ! ”

All these souvenirs and anecdotes were told me in John Spiromilio’s drawing-room. Sofas and chairs aligned the wall,

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on which old engravings, representing the King and Queen of Greece, not to mention Sadi Carnot, hung next to innumerable family photographs. On a sealed-up door, white-washed over, someone had painted in blue the Greek genealogy of the Spiromilios, and opposite this, by way of frieze, an archaic fresco of Corfu in the time of the Venetians enlivened the wall.

The company consisted of the local notables and military worthies. They spoke to me freely in French, while I toyed with a small rose which a young shepherd, Mylio Bolanos, had gathered on St. Michael's hill and offered me with a smile of pleasure as I came out from the *Castello*.

THE COAST OF EPIRUS

Khimara, May 9th.

A HIGH wind which prevented the *Zatuna* from coming from Corfu to fetch me, held me prisoner at Khimara, for I could not think of undertaking, with my distinguished companion and interpreter, a sexagenarian, the journey over the mountains to Santi Quaranta, where we could get on to the Delvino road. Of course, the whole of this region, from Yanina to Argyrocastro, depends on Santi Quaranta, and ever will do so. It is the only breach through which one can pass. The coast region, and especially Khimara, depends for its supplies on Corfu, blocking the western horizon. You have only to see, behind

The Coast of Epirus

the village, the steep, volcanic bluffs which bar approach on the eastern side, to realize the situation. The Greeks, brothers of the Corfiotes, their near neighbours, are established on all this fertile shore of the Ionian Sea. The fraternizing is so complete that the Turks had even given up trying to ignore it. For form's sake, they maintained a semblance of authority in these villages, which have been purely Greek, by culture as well as by inclination, for centuries. If I was not a little surprised to find so many people speaking French here, I was even more astonished to discover that this Western culture was not a thing of yesterday. Not the least of my finds at Khimara was an ancient edition of the *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis*. It would be deplorable if European diplomacy handed over this vigorous little centre of Greek and Western civilization to the comico-tragic Kingdom of Albania. Khimara's claim to union with Greece

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is based as much on its traditions and local feeling as on its geographical and economic situation. It is the top nail holding the blue and white flag to the staff of the coast of Epirus, and so truly has it been driven home that no storm could remove it. The whole flag would come away first !

Thus it was not merely for the purpose of extending her frontiers that Greece fixed the limits of Hellenic Epirus on the coast to the north of Khimara. Khimara cannot be other than Greek because it is Greek already. The Khimariotes are famous throughout the Greek Empire. They are a by-word for patriotism. They have to-day earned the reward for their attachment to the mother-country.

Greece demanded, therefore, that her new frontier should start from Gramata Bay, following the course of the little stream which discharges its waters there, until it reached the crests of the Keravnia

The Coast of Epirus

Mountains, where the summit of Mount Kjorl, more than two thousand metres high, was to be the point at which it turned eastwards. This line had the advantage of sweeping into Greek territory the hinterland of Khimara, for if the final pacification of this region is intended, it is impossible to leave Khimara to the tender mercies of the Albanian mountaineers. Hitherto, the Khimariotes, ever on guard on the heights, had protected their villages against marauders, a feat beyond the powers of the less numerous populations of Nivitza, Lukovo and other villages which I had visited in the last few days. But this state of war had not been without injuring the agricultural and commercial activity of this region. If ever the Greek Government is able, through occupation of this territory, effectively to police it as well as hold all the vital strategic points, men will sleep in peace in these villages of the Epirus coast.

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Any other course would be recklessly to perpetuate a state of affairs against which the Ottoman Government was helpless, and purely and simply to deliver up the peaceful and industrial Greeks of this district to the traditional brigandage of the Albanians, who would be all the more brazen because their authority had been recognized by Europe.

During my enforced sojourn here, I collected as much information as possible about the life and customs of the Khimariotes. I will admit that I was intrigued by the institution of the *demogerontia*, the council of eight "Elders" managing public affairs. I was told some entertaining stories as to their proceedings.

The Khimariotes, who go about swathed in cartridge belts and never move without their rifles, are somewhat similar to our Corsican cousins in temperament, and it sometimes happens that fatal shots are exchanged between young warriors, prompted by jealousy or stung by some

The Coast of Epirus

insult. There follows a regular vendetta. The *demogerontiaë* then play the rôle of peacemaker. They summon the rival families, and extol the virtue of forgiveness, just like the President of the Divorce Court. If reason triumphs over the passion for revenge, the affair ends with a dinner and general reconciliation. Otherwise, the vendetta continues.

Dinners are much in favour and evidence here. Every rich citizen bids every day eight, ten, and even up to twenty guests to his table. And the favourite dish is *agneau à la palikari*.

How the mountains will echo to the sound of joyous salvos, how *agneau à la palikari* will be consumed wholesale on the day when a boat from Corfu brings to Khimara the news that union with Greece is a fact !

Meanwhile, we were without news of the outside world for three days. A brave fellow volunteered to get through. He left a short time ago for Santi

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Quaranta. He had to walk all afternoon and through the night to catch the Austrian mail-boat, which, coming from Brindisi, called at Santi Quaranta about half-past nine in the morning on its way to Corfu. It was thus that my last telegram and letter reached France via Corfu. The papers were sewn into a little bag, which he hid in his shirt, and he set out by difficult mountain tracks, known only to the Khimariotes and the goats.

THE HINTERLAND OF EPIRUS

Yanina, May 7th.

WHEN I got back to Santi Quaranta after my departure from Khimara, which was celebrated by tremendous salvos, it was only the next morning that I was able to resume my journey to Delvino and Argyrocastro. This delay had cheated thousands of the good mountain folk who had followed a whole night's walk by a whole day's waiting by the roadside, merely to shout "Long live France!" and prove to me their Hellenic faith and hopes. Some of them had held out all the same, spent yet another night in the open air, and this morning offered me their humble votes hastily scribbled in pencil on a scrap of paper. They had no French flag, and a piece of white cloth

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ornamented with a rough blue cross, the whole attached to a stick, was the only standard around which they had gathered. There were men and women there, literally in rags, disinherited souls, and yet of a moving beauty with their bright smile when I saluted their poor emblem. "Three days ago," said Dr. Kytariote, the commandant of an excellent little field hospital near Santi Quaranta, "when the news ran round that a Frenchman was coming, you have no idea of the excitement and pleasure. Everything was expected of you: liberation and union with Greece. You are bringing these poor folk an infinite hope."

The former impression of moving, appealing pathos, was renewed. After centuries of oppression, the Epirotes had at length heard the hour of deliverance strike. It never occurred to them that their history was to be given a violent twist and that they were going to be put under the Albanian yoke, a hundred

The Hinterland of Epirus

times worse than the Turkish. It is not a question of an arbitrary frontier, adding a few square kilometres more or less to the Kingdom of Greece. It is a question of the conscience of Europe.

DELVINO

MY arrival at Delvino, picturesquely situated in a wide gorge on the far side of the plain of Kaliassa, was an event the scale of which I had not anticipated. Two thousand people were assembled, with a number of Greek and French flags. The slopes on the roadside were lined with little girls from an important Greek school, all arrayed in pale blue and white. They sang in chorus a good attempt at the *Marseillaise*, while the crowd yelled “*Zito Gallia!*” and the schoolmaster, surrounded by nine priests, including the Superior of the Convent of St. John of the Apocalypse, delivered a stirring speech to the Frenchman who

Delvino

had come to see them. His concluding words were : “ Long live France ! Long live Greece ! Long live the Union ! Long live King Constantine ! ” These words were taken up by the crowd in an outburst of enthusiasm.

Delvino is a town of 4,000 persons, half of them Greeks, the other half Albanians. The latter are not very clear as to what they mean by the country of Albania. The President of the Albanian Committee of Delvino, Namik bey, in the previous year represented his fellow-citizens at the Albanian Conference at Berat, while the Musulman mayor of Delvino signed the plebiscite in favour of union with Greece a few days ago. A large number of Albanians whom I met—they are easily distinguished by their red fez—greeted me as cordially as the Greeks. From inquiries which I made during my few hours’ stay in Delvino, it appears that the Albanian population of these mixed districts have only one desire

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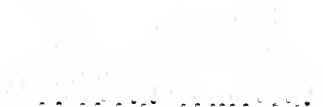
in life : to keep the belongings they have acquired.

The idea of an Albanian kingdom is non-existent. The population of Delvino itself is halved between the two nationalities, but if the whole district is taken there are only 5,500 Albanians among 22,000 inhabitants. The Albanians of Delvino, who have only been Musulman since Ali Pasha's time, have preserved the forms of their earlier Greek faith. They go to funerals with Greek rites and send their sons and daughters to Greek schools.

I paid a call on the teacher who had conducted with such enthusiasm and success the chorus of pupils. In the schoolroom I saw the *Marseillaise* still written in Greek characters, with the pronunciation indicated, on the black-board. The teacher herself spoke French. She came from the Higher Grade School at Corfu. She apologized for not having done better. " We only knew two days



Argirocastro. "Long live Greece! Long live France!"



Delvino

ago that you were coming.” As I thanked her for all her trouble, she replied: “ I have only done my duty ; France is our protectress and friend.”

TO ARGYROCASTRO

I SHOULD have required to make a far greater mass of notes than could possibly be telegraphed at once if I attempted to give even an approximate description of the journey from Delvino to Argyrocastro. Everything I had seen, felt, and experienced hitherto paled in comparison with my reception. Every five hundred metres I had to stop to pass under a triumphal arch, hear a speech, witness a peasant dance, acknowledge a salvo of rifles, receive flowers or a gift of hard-boiled eggs. On the pink shell of one of them had been scratched in French : " Union or Death." The enthusiasm was so terrific that I despaired of being able to abbreviate for telegraphic purposes a whole series of cinematograph scenes, each

To Argyrocastro

of which deserved, historically speaking, detailed description, if only to explain fully the popular feeling of Epirus.

My arrival at Argyrocastro was the climax. In the evening a procession of thousands, holding candles, escorted me under the old feudal ramparts to the Cathedral and the archiepiscopal palace. It was only the occasional intrusion of a "*Zito Khronos!*" ("Long live the *Temps!*") among the chorus of "Long live France! Long live Constantine!" that prevented me from forgetting that I was only a journalist.

THE VALLEY OF ARGYROCASTRO

Argyrocastro, May 10th.

I HAVE given a brief but comprehensive survey of the astounding impression produced on me by my journey from Delvino to Argyrocastro. I think it necessary to go over this same ground again in some detail, because, as I have said, my experiences were a revelation of the sentiments of Epirus and the real situation.

From Delvino to the Musina Pass the road winds round the slopes of high hills, which might even be called mountains, in magnificent country. The whole way along the road I encountered never-ending convoys of donkeys and mules, going to Delvino to fetch the supplies that are sent out from Santi Quaranta. There is

The Valley of Argyrocastro

no other road. The general geographical system of Epirus is strikingly simple. On the west side is the coast strip from Prevesa to Khimara, separated from the interior of the country by lofty chains of mountains and therefore necessarily looking to Corfu. In the centre of this coast-line is a gap, Santi Quaranta, which allows the little plain (with Delvino at its far end and itself a kind of ante-chamber to Central Epirus) to form part of the coast zone and be, therefore, itself a vassal of Corfu. After Delvino there is a barrier of mountains, and at the Musina Pass the traveller descends into the long and spacious valley of Argyrocastro, which gets supplies from Yanina in the south, and Delvino and the Musina Pass on the north. Economically this arrangement is comprehensively simple; too simple, perhaps.

From the ethnographical point of view we have in the coast region an overwhelming Greek majority, though this Greek

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element is peace-loving and timorous, except for that pugnacious and uncompromising citadel, Khimara. This population has always lived in terror of the minority of Albanian mountain marauders, whose impudence was all the greater because it was secretly encouraged by the Ottoman Government, who found brigandage a profitable and easy source of revenue. When it is remembered that in the district of Delvino alone there were sixty-seven Greek villages and little farming communities (*Chiflik*) which had been recently devastated, looted and burned, some idea of the depredations of the Albanian bands may be gathered. The occupation of this region by the Greek Army resulted in the capture of the northern road from the most notorious of the Albanian leaders, such as Mohamed bey Kokas, who destroyed Nivitza, the first village I visited. At the time I was writing he was at Valona, where he was earning distinction by his remarkable

The Valley of Argyrocastro

advocacy of a Greater Albania ! Of course he would be furious at the idea of reducing his hunting-ground !

If peace now reigned in Western Epirus, if the villagers returned to their ruined homes and took up their work again, it must not be forgotten that the presence of seven thousand men of the army of occupation in this district (Khimara-Argyrocastro) was the real factor in this resurrection. Greece, merely to discharge her moral obligation to her children of Epirus, would be obliged to retain the 9th Corps to police the district so long as Albanian bands practised their local industries outside their own boundaries. As for the small farming Albanian element, formerly Christian and even now closely mingled with the Greeks, it would regard as pure deliverance the end of the nightmare of oppression which the Albanian bands and their chiefs, thanks to Turkish helplessness, spread over the land. There is no nationalism strong enough to regard servi-

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tude, insecurity of life and the absence of justice as necessary evils.

At the Musina Pass, where I was to meet a concourse of the inhabitants of all the villages round Drovieni (the most important of them), numbering about one thousand persons, who had been waiting since two o'clock in the morning, you enter, as I have already said, a region of a totally different character. Whereas on the coast, and even at Delvino, I met Greeks whose gaze was constantly fixed on Corfu, men whom the propinquity of the sea had enticed to Patras, the Piræus, or the Greek islands of the Ionian Sea—in short, men who were, so to speak, mere dwellers on the eastern bank of the Greek lake of Corfu; here for the first time I heard the cry: “Love live free Epirus!” The inhabitants of the coast district know Greece only. Their cry is: “Long live Greece! Long live the Union!” and their minds are free from any national local sentiment. They are Greeks who lack



Near the Musina Pass.

The Valley of Argyrocastro

only the official trade-mark. Here, on the other hand, the Epirote ideal holds sway. You find pride in being a nation which played an outstanding part in Greek history from the days of Pyrrhus, son of Achilles, onwards. Hitherto I had found Greeks only, Greeks like all others, established at Santi Quaranta, Nivitza and Khimara, just as you find them in the suburbs of Athens. But once Musina Pass was behind me, everything—costume, attitude, speech—indicated that I was entering a district where the race had maintained its primitive purity, without the intermingling of foreign strains and with no loss of vitality. The real Epirus began here.

The plain of Argyrocastro, which is watered by a tributary of the Voyusa, is broad and systematically cultivated. On the left bank villages succeed each other almost uninterruptedly. The road from Delvino, which drops down through the Musina Pass in sharp spirals, giving the

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panorama, bounded by snow-capped firs, many and swiftly-changing aspects, meets the road in the plains at the village of Grapsi. At this cross-roads two oaks lean fraternally towards each other, forming a natural arch. This had been decorated and hung with flags, and first the school-master and then the priest, with his black cap on his head and his spectacles on his nose, read me speeches about the liberation of Epirus, the support of France and the love of Greece. (After hearing so many of these speeches I was now getting quite proficient in modern Greek !)

Before the speech had finished, some twenty women in their Sunday best came on the scene and formed a circle. They wore velvet bodices with two-pointed swallow-tail basques held in place by a girdle, pleated white skirts like the *fustanella* of the Palikari, stockings of multi-coloured stripes, and white head-gear framing their faces after the manner of our nuns. When the speech was

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over and the last of the cheers which followed the peroration, the dance began. The men took the lead. As they moved their feet, they proceeded to sing, as at the opening of a minuet, two verses, which all the women took up with the same marked rhythm, at the same time advancing to the right. It was an old warrior ditty of the exploits of Djavela de Suli, a hero of the wars against Ali Pasha, that tyrant of Epirus. The women were by no means the least enthusiastic. Some of them had bandoliers round their waists and rifles on their shoulders. One in particular, bronzed by the sun and noted for her blazing eyes, was in a kind of frenzy. She held her carbine all the time, and every now and then fired into the blue sky. She drew me aside for a moment, flung herself at my hand and kissed it, and then rejoined the frantic *farandola*. The adventures of Djavela were having an unexpected sequel, for there was a distinct likelihood of the capture of Yanina

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by the Greek army, an event which would indubitably mark the end of Ali Pasha's outrageous régime !

We had all the difficulty in the world to get away and had literally to tear ourselves free from all these good people, who were prepared to dance until midnight. But it was already late, too late even to take photographs. I bitterly regretted this and continued to do so all the way to Argyrocastro, for it only comes to a man once in a lifetime to pass in such a triumphal car. The inhabitants of all the villages turned out on to the road and triumphal arches succeeded one another. I remember the good folk of Liugari, Frastani, Foritza, Tariachatas, Haskovo, Vanista, Gorantsi, Dervitsani, the only places I noted. Everywhere were placards : " Union or Death ! " (in French or Greek), " Long live free Epirus ! " " Long live France ! " Some of the arches were moving for their very crudity, such as three logs with a decoration of laurel



Argirocastro. General view.

The Valley of Argyrocastro

leaves. A more elaborate one had embroidered spirals. At one place twenty metres of road had been strewn with flowers. At another the priest, with three choir-boys, had brought the church plate to lend a little splendour to the proceedings.

At another it was a plate of jam (*lukum*) and the traditional glass of water that was solemnly brought to my carriage, elsewhere a small glass of poor local spirits. But everywhere the young women had their best finery out and the jewels they had worn at the recent orthodox Easter. They were drawn up in a circle on each side of the road, awaiting the signal to dance. And of course there was the unending series of speeches, addresses, songs, salvos and bouquets.

There was one tiny village, the name of which I have unfortunately forgotten, which numbered in all some twenty souls. Here neither speech nor dance had been prepared, owing to the small number

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of possible participants. They simply gathered round their priest, the smallest children in front, and formed a melancholy little group at the foot of the double gallows which did duty for a triumphal arch. When the carriage stopped, the priest delivered himself of a few words, hardly that. I asked my travelling companion to translate this short speech, and he replied: "He is asking God to grant you a happy life, as you have come here to see the unfortunate people of Epirus."

ARGYROCASTRO

Argyrocastro, May 11th.

I DO not intend to describe Argyrocastro, with its houses clinging like wasps' nests to the side of five buttresses of the mountains, and dominated by the huge Byzantine fortress of Alexis Comnenus, which Ali Pasha later converted into one of the citadels of his tyranny. The town was *en fête*, and the Greek Metropolitan, Mgr. Basil, who for sixteen years had guarded and guided the Christians of this part of Epirus with the greatest goodwill (he had already occupied the bishoprics of Yanina and Berat), had come to meet and welcome the French journalist. It was by the side of this prelate, who supported his green old age on a long stick with a silver knob,

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that I climbed the hill, passing through a great crowd, which cheered and waved flags. We arrived thus at the ancient Law Courts, a vast edifice of archaic architecture, with large interior wooden galleries running round a central hall. The accompanying crowd here took up its station and shouted lustily : “ Long live France ! ” While I paid my respects to the authorities, M. Tzetzos, the Prefect, Colonel Yoannon, commanding the 9th Division, and Major Trupakis, night fell. His Eminence asked me to the Archbishop’s Palace. As we appeared on the steps, a veritable roar burst forth. The scene was almost fairy-like. Thousands of tiny lights stabbed the darkness. They were candles, and the result was the nearest they could get to a torchlight procession. Before us, two standard-bearers at the head of the cortège had bound together the Greek and French flags. Children, lowering their candles to the ground, lighted the venerable prelate’s footsteps. So we pro-

Argyrocastro

ceeded at a solemn processional pace. Soon the crowd, who were now adding : “ Long live General Eydoux ! Long live the French army ! ” and even “ Long live the *Temps* ! ” to their other acclamations, began to sing hymns. First came the Hymn of the Resurrection : “ Christ is risen. He has brought to life those in the tomb,” followed by a chant the singing of which was marked by special enthusiasm because it contained topical allusions :

“ Lord, save Thy people,
And give Thy blessing
To this people, thy sheep.
Ever grant victory to our kings
Over the barbarians.”

It was an old hymn, dating from Byzantine times. The Turkish authorities had no love for it, of course, and indeed enforced the substitution of the words “ the Faithful ” instead of “ our Kings.” Now all hearts could express themselves freely,

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and an enormous amount of conviction was put into the words :

Nikas tois basileuoi
Kata barbaron doroumenos.

It was barely two months since the Turkish Army had evacuated Argyrocastro and the Greeks entered it. The town was already transformed. All the paint and cloth shops were flourishing. Every pot of blue paint, every blue rag found a purchaser. Even the *much-arabiehs* were painted in the Greek colours. The Musulmans, who were numerous here (Etienne Labranche once said that they congregated in the principal towns to assure themselves a numerical superiority which they did not possess in the whole country), were perfectly calm and content with the new turn of affairs. The exemplary behaviour of the Greek troops filled them with amazement. They expected the victorious army to loot wholesale. As soon

Argyrocastro

as things settled down they were perfectly satisfied.

I had a state visit from the *cadi*, the *mufti*, and various other authorities whose office I did not exactly know. They spoke highly of the Greek officials and administration, with whom they were on excellent terms. It was only necessary to see the familiarity with which these Albanians and the Greek officers, for they all spoke Greek, treated each other to realize that this is no fiction. The certainty of order and justice immediately won over the best of the Albanians of Argyrocastro, the only Albanians in this exclusively Greek district. The smaller fry were indifferent. A few *beys* alone, a handful of ex-magnates with uneasy conscience, were still unhappy. They expected a day of reckoning.

SOME TOUCHING DOCUMENTS

I SPENT my time yesterday afternoon in running through and getting the gist of a growing sheaf of papers which has already reached some dimensions. In it were all the requests received and all the addresses delivered during my journey.

It included regular petitions filling whole manuscript books, such as that handed to me on the Pass of Musina by the thirteen neighbouring villages, Upper Lechnitza, Lower Lechnitza, Divra, Divros, Aghios Andreas, Maltsani, Tsarkovitza, Lusati, Krongi, Musina, Keraseti, Grasdani and Smenitza. These villages compose an entire district, which you will find on the map east of Delvino.

Some Touching Documents

The chief persons of each village affixed their signatures to the following declaration : “ We are Greeks and we demand union with Greece.”

I give here the declaration drawn up by the schoolmaster and signed by the two ephors of the commune of Dervitszani.

“ We are Greeks of Epirus, not Albanians. Nothing can shake our determination. Now that we enjoy the blessing of liberty, no one shall ever tear us from the arms of our mother-country, Greece. As the sons of Greece, we prefer death to the yoke of an uncivilized and uncultured people.”

A wafer on which is a representation of the crucifix accompanies the signatures.

The representatives of Graspi, Lungari and Frastani write :

“ The schools and charitable institutions of this country are the work of Greece and of Epirus, the work of the country’s own sons. This fact attests the sentiments of the people.”

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The village priest of Sofratika associates himself with his commune in declaring that "it will defend its liberty to the last breath."

The commune of Haskovo declares that "union with Greece is a question where discussion and compromise are impossible. Liberty is not a subject for argument."

The commune of Vanista says :

"We read in the newspapers that the powerful ones of this world, misconceiving the national feeling and the sentiments graven upon our hearts, wish to hand us over to the mercies of a barbarous people. We have always fought for liberty on the side of Greece. No one has the right to tear it from us."

The folk of Calogorantsi assert the national enthusiasm for the blessed liberty that they have achieved. "Liberty was the dream of our fathers. To-day it is realized. Greek Epirus is a noble country, not to be confused with barbarous Albania. We shall remain free

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Epirotes.” Here follow the names of all the chief men of the commune.

The same foundation underlies all these declarations and all the speeches that were delivered. It is the impossibility of exchanging the Turkish yoke for the Albanian, which would be a hundred times worse, the assertion of love of Greece, the necessity for union with it, the cry “ Union or death ! ”

One of the orators actually quoted the verses of Rigas Ferreos, the poet and protomartyr of Greek independence. They have become a classic in Greece, and, I am told, in Epirus.

“ Better an hour of liberty than forty years of fettered servitude.”

In order to convey an accurate idea of the gist and tenor of these addresses, I will give the complete text of one.

“ Sir, the people of Epirus feel a joy

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at your presence which is beyond all power of expression. For you represent a country which is the beloved friend of Greece. You represent France, which always, at all epochs, has defended the vital interests of Greece. Epirus has long suffered under a cruel yoke. Nevertheless, our country, condemned to slavery so many centuries ago, has at last seen its hopes realized, thanks to the valiant Greek Army.

“ When we lift our faces to the free heavens, and breathe the pure air of liberty, gazing with wide-open eyes upon its radiant light, we suffer at the same time the pain of knowing that cruel and unchristian hearts inspired by selfish ideas and interests are straining every nerve to drive once more beneath the yoke this people upon whom the light has shone, endeavouring to subject a country purely Greek to a race which is unversed in civilization and of a despotic temper.

“ History proves that Epirus has wit-

Some Touching Documents

nessed the birth of heroes who, ever since the period of the first War of Independence, have shed their blood for union with Greece. As Epirotes, we would rather lie rotting upon our barren mountains than put ourselves in the grasp of the iron claws of a wilful tyranny. But we count upon the liberal sentiments of our friends among the Great Powers, France and England, and upon the sincere affection for us shown by their representatives, to whom we offer our tears as evidence of our gratitude.

“ And with one voice we cry :

“ Death before Separation.

“ Long live the beloved friend of Greece, our mother-country.

“ Long live France.

“ Long may you live, the representative of France.

“ Long live our King, Constantine.

“ Long live Venizelos.

“ Long live Greece.

“ Long live Epirus.”

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This address and the quotations made above were subscribed by the whole valley of Argyrocastro. The valley is entirely Greek, and Greek villages extend considerably further north than Argyrocastro. However, I was unable to visit them all. This caused keen disappointment, and I began to receive first telegrams, and soon deputations of villagers from the country to the north of Argyrocastro. One of the most typical of these telegrams comes from Tepeleni, a local centre of some importance. As a matter of fact, it is signed by four Moslems, the mufti, the mayor and two sheykhs.

“ We hear that you cannot visit our town, and so from a distance greet the representative of the French people and bid him welcome in our country. At the same time, we beg you to make known our deep love for our Motherland, Greece, from whom no armed intervention

Some Touching Documents

by the labourers in the cause of injustice shall ever separate us.

(Signed) “ Suahid, Mufti.

“ Abdullah, Mayor.

“ Sheykh Kalen.

“ Sheykh Mezud.

“ Economos.

“ Spilios.

“ Andonios.”

The deputations from the northern villages expressed themselves in the same manner. These good people came in an endless procession to the big hall of the law courts at Argyrocastro, where I stood in a crowd of turbanned and befezzed Mahommedans.

When all had duly delivered their addresses, I saw a solitary figure approaching, a shepherd of sorts, who was twisting his cap between his fingers and seemed to be the victim of a despairing emotion.

He had travelled from Berat, over forty-five miles distant. Dropping his cap,

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he told me in a choking voice what crowds of Greeks over there in his country went in fear of their lives (here he drew a finger across his throat), and he begged me to demand the inclusion of Berat in Greek Epirus. However was I to tell him that he must give up all hope, that the Greek Government had not included Berat within the new frontiers? I shook his hand in silence and lowered my eyes to avoid the dumb question in his.

RECOLLECTIONS OF ARGYRO- CASTRO AND DELVINAKI

Yanina, May 13th.

IT is raining, and there is thunder growling in the distance. Mountains and lake have vanished behind the thick veil which is turning all the street gutters into torrents. It is a perfect deluge, one of those dismal days which you meet on a summer holiday in Switzerland, when you fly to your own room in the hotel, and stay there with no company except the flowers you have picked on the mountain pastures. I have flowers, too, in my tooth-glass, the only vase I have been able to find. There are roses, yellow marguerites and irises, some sprigs of mint and other fragrant greenery. It is a

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selection made from the mass piled on to my carriage and presented to me during the journey from Argyrocastro here.

The sight of them calls up pictures in my mind, and how could I better spend a rainy day than in putting down these recollections on paper for fear lest my memory, under the spell of more vivid emotions, should first neglect and then forget them altogether? To begin with, there is before my eyes the little girl who presented me with irises at Delvinaki. There was quite a crowd there from every part of the district of Pogoni ; in fact there were so many people that they had built two triumphal arches, and I had to listen to as many as five addresses. The manuscript of one, which consisted of at least three large sheets, was decorated with three enormous calico rosettes, red, white and blue, and ended with cheers for the French Republic, the French people and for Monsieur ΠΕΥΕ ΠΙΩ. It was after the first address that

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the small child climbed, or rather, was pushed, on to the step of the carriage. She was afraid, horribly afraid, and I had to put on my nicest expression, that which one keeps for very tiny children when one wants to see them smile. She was trembling and could not remember the little compliments which they had taught her. She stumbled over her task, and her childish eyes seemed to be staring into the mists of the far distance. I should have liked to help her and say: "I know all about it. I know the misery of those speech-day recitations with the head master on the platform. Don't be afraid. Just give me your irises. I quite understand." But she did not understand the language spoken by my eyes, and with the anxious crowd breathing heavily all round, she lost her head and tried to go on. Then I kissed her, and kissed the flowers too, I believe, at the same time as her fair hair, and cried, "Zito Hellas."

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The crowd fired off rifles and cheered, making such a commotion that I hoped in the general hubbub the child would forget her woes and join in the gaiety all round her. But she stayed where she was, on the step of the carriage, with her large round eyes now fixed on me, and seemed very unhappy, as though I had played my part very badly in cutting short her welcome, as though, after being chosen to speak for all her brothers and sisters, the school-children of her village, the virtue of her little action were now lost beyond recall, as though the mystic ritual of sympathy were made invalid by the omission of a single word. Perhaps she will remain under this impression, that she spoilt everything, until the day when the Greek flag floats finally over the district of Pogoni. And, no doubt, she will never know that she played her childish part well, and promoted the cause of Hellenism gallantly and effectively.

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Now my mind runs back to Argyrocastro on a Sunday. At church the Gospel was read by a sergeant, who chanted in that terrible nasal voice which is so common at orthodox ceremonies. The Bishop, Vasilios, was on his throne; the enamelled crozier on which he leant was decorated with sky-blue ribands, the Greek colour, and, looking up, I saw blue wreaths among the purple hangings, and even blue shades cut out of paper on the candelabra. After the service, the faithful climbed the narrow, sharply-rising street leading towards the citadel, to go down again across the market to the town hall. The crowd was thick, and soon overflowed into the neighbouring alleys. Some speakers stood in a group on the terrace in front of the portico. These were the delegates from the villages threatened with annexation to the Albanian kingdom. They uttered their determination to struggle to the last against this iniquity, and their protesta-

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tions were received with cheers. As I leant out of one of the windows of the town hall to take a photograph, I was seen, and fresh and deafening cheers for France were raised.

Some hours later, as I was engaged in writing, a deputation was announced by my host, M. Zotidis, an amiable old bachelor, who, they told me, had left all his money to the Greek schools at Argyrocastro and even taken the precaution of building his own house on such a plan that it could be turned into a college directly after his death. Hastily getting into a collar, tie and waistcoat, I joined the visitors in the reception-room. They were the school-master, the school-mistress and some of their pupils. They must have chosen the little boys and girls with the newest clothes ! Anyhow, when I had questioned them about their parents' professions I found that two out of the four boys were sons of tailors. As the usual jam-tray went round I talked with

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the teachers. They told me of their efforts to keep alive the Greek idea under Turkish rule as simply as if they had done the most natural thing in the world. None the less, the story revealed the fineness of their characters, and history could tell a fine story of these Greek teachers in Epirus, subjected to every kind of official affront, to every restriction, and pursuing their patriotic task in spite of all. No Greek book printed at Athens was allowed into the schools. Everything had to come from Constantinople. Greek history was forbidden. Accordingly they gave extra lessons in secret, and at these, without book or paper, the little Epirote learnt to know his motherland, its national hymn, its poetry and the stories of its heroes. The pupils held in their hands the teachers' lives. An indiscreet or a treacherous word would have been enough. Surely this is rather touching! Here, at an age when children are so fond of play, were 200 small boys and 250 little girls readily

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attending additional lessons to talk of Greece, and then going home with closed lips and enthusiasm kept secret in their breasts.

When I asked the boys what they meant to be, each answered, "A soldier." So I did not keep them long perched on M. Zotidis' arm-chairs, and they were able to join their friends, who were drilling on the road below the fort.

A last recollection of Argyrocastro. The commandant told me that in the last few days numbers of peasants had come to him to ask for arms to defend their freedom in case, after all, an attempt were made to annex their villages to the kingdom of Albania. He mentioned in particular one woman, who came with a full bandolier across her breast. "I have the bullets, and only want the rifle. Give me a rifle. I won't go away without a rifle." The Commandant did not tell me if she went away successful, but if he did not give way he must have had

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some difficulty in getting rid of this Amazon, for the Epirote women are as desperately determined as the men, if not more so. They know what will happen to them under Albanian tyranny.

MEETING THE CROWN PRINCE

BUT for the sixty horse-power car to which I entrusted my fate I should have reached Koritza in time to see the triumphal entry of the Crown Prince. As we were descending a hill thirty-four miles from Yanina the brakes went wrong, the car charged a tree, smashed the radiator and capsized, leaving me fortunately still alive. However, I had to wait twenty-four hours for another conveyance, and covered the remaining seventy-five miles at a more cautious rate. In any case, the state of the road did not permit of record-breaking, and we were quite satisfied to arrive with whole skins. The road winds along the side of bare mountains, as dismal as a lunar landscape, in a series of hair-pin bends, and

Meeting the Crown Prince

the torrent beds are crossed by sensational culverts, Javid Pasha having blown up all the bridges. The whole district is characterized by a depressing sterility. For long miles we never saw a soul. The countryside is completely deforested, and there are only a few herds of goats to be seen browsing on the thin vegetation. Still, there are a few collections of houses : first Liaskoviki, then Brorusto, then Colonia. Feverish preparations were being made everywhere ; at Liaskoviki, where Javid left some hundreds of wounded at their last gasp, all the houses had been whitewashed and the doors and windows were decorated with wreaths of box. At Brorusto triumphal arches had been erected at each end of the village. The square at Colonia was ornamented with flag-poles, wrapped in blue and white spirals, like a Spanish village on the day of a bull-fight. Mahommedan and Christian vied in enthusiasm. In one place was a soldier, the handy-man, driving nails,

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while five red-fezzed villagers held the ladder for him. In other places we saw Mahommedans going about with immense bundles of green-stuff. There was nothing to distinguish one from another. All spoke in Greek when they answered our questions or bade us welcome and a happy journey.

It was seven o'clock when we arrived at Koritza. The appearance of the town was a complete surprise to us. The wide boulevard and the two square towers of the cathedral gave the place an air not in the least Oriental, and still less Turkish. After all, one feels quite outside Europe in these typical little villages, with their shamefaced churches, which look exactly like the surrounding houses till the eye falls on the timid curve of the chancel.

Koritza, however, is a Western town transplanted to the middle of Epirus. The first touch of Islam which caught our eyes was equally strange. Looking from one of the windows of the prefecture, I

Meeting the Crown Prince

saw, silhouetted against the red glare of the sun, softened as it sank behind the distant mountains, the white minaret of the mosque, with its sharp, conical roof. At the moment the balcony from which the muezzin calls to prayer was lit up with little lamps, for the evening service was beginning, and it was something very touching to see this sign of the mosque's participation in the rejoicings of which a Christian prince was to be the object.

THE NIGHT FESTIVAL AT KORITZA

IT was nine o'clock. Through every street and alley the crowd was pouring towards the little episcopal palace in which the Crown Prince was lodged. All the houses were illuminated with the little blue flames of candles set in a row behind the glass windows. The sight was a little disconcerting ; it was so like Christmas in the North of France, when they celebrate the birth of Our Lord. Everyone who went out of doors carried a lighted taper under the starry sky of May through the warmth of a glorious spring evening, and one was surprised at not seeing beneath their feet, bluish-white in the moonlight, the snow of a late December.

The Night Festival at Koritza

The one festival may be a symbol of the other, and perhaps the allegory is not too strained, for this people was celebrating the free expression of its religious and patriotic faith, the first and greatest revelation.

The Crown Prince was on a balcony of the palace. He had stuck an eyeglass in one eye to keep himself in countenance, but it did not succeed in concealing his emotion, and from time to time the glass slipped from his eye and he had to wipe away the moisture which clouded it. The police could hardly keep the crowd within bounds, and it began to invade the palace garden. There, for about three-quarters of an hour, an indescribable throng filed past, thousands of men, women and children, cheering the Prince, singing patriotic hymns, waving Venetian lanterns, flags, handkerchiefs and hats, lifting their hands together in salutation and bowing. In this procession were old women with fur-trimmed cloaks, carrying the Easter-

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candle and crossing themselves as they passed beneath the balcony, old men ceremoniously carrying tapers, others whose tapers and candles were decorated with blue favours. There were young boys dressed as Evzoni, and others, poorer, whose little robes of dark holland and whose tousled hair made them look like choir-boys at a Mass for all those whom the world has despised and rejected. There were babies perched on their fathers' shoulders, dark-haired girls in white mantillas, townsfolk in bowler hats and peasants burnt with the sun. Red fezzes, too, were in evidence, and their owners not the least forward in crying "Long live the Crown Prince." Among these Mahommedans was one who attracted a good deal of attention, an old man bowed almost double, who leant upon a knotted staff and held a lantern in one hand. He moved slowly forward, while the crowd held respectfully aloof. On arriving before the balcony, he raised his eyes, saluted the

The Night Festival at Koritzza

Prince by putting his lantern to his heart, and passed on his way towards the narrow exit which opened on to the front of the ancient cathedral.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE CROWN PRINCE

THE Prince invited us to join him on the first-floor of the palace. From there we could take in at a glance the whole of the gay throng. In it were multitudes of moving lights and from it came the sound of continuous cheering. A little band was playing on the grass plot, and one felt as though it were the 14th of July. After all, it was the fall of a Bastille that everyone was celebrating.

As the march-past ceased for a moment, the Crown Prince gave me his impressions.

“It is a pity,” he said, “that you could not arrive yesterday. I received demonstrations of enthusiasm which would have given you even more solid proof, if possible, than this evening of the sentiments of

Impressions of the Crown Prince

this people towards my country, which is really their own. As I passed, doves were loosed and people dashed forward to kiss my feet. I have never been so strongly moved. For hours I had to receive deputations from every village of the neighbourhood, and those not yet occupied by the Greek forces entreated me to send troops as a guarantee that they would not be included in Albania.”

The Prince spoke next of his journey from Salonica by way of Monastir. Everywhere his reception had been equally enthusiastic.

However, the march-past began again. Now we had all the gipsies of the town, who also had determined to welcome the Crown Prince. While he saluted, leaning on the rail of the balcony, I turned over the leaves of some books lying on the table. One was an old fifteenth-century Gospel, the other a book printed in Greek in 1744 at the neighbouring town of Moschopolis. The road was too bad for

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the Prince to visit this historic centre of Hellenism, so they had brought him these witnesses to a civilization of which Albania could certainly give no similar proofs. In Moschopolis there are 24 Christian churches, and Greek scholastic institutions which give instruction to 2,200 pupils, a number comparable to that at Koritza, where, out of a total population of 18,000 souls, 14,000 are Greeks.

At last the march-past ceased. The Prince left the balcony and the crowd dispersed through the narrow streets to the broad illuminated boulevard, where till a late hour the people of this town, who only the other day dare not leave their houses after sunset, will celebrate their liberation with songs of joy.

Liaskoviki, May 19th.

Yesterday I was present at the reception of the Crown Prince in the mosque

Impressions of the Crown Prince

of Koritza. An arm-chair covered with red velvet had been set in the middle of the building, and all the Mahommedan clergy, surrounded by the chief men, formed a semicircle about the Prince. An address was read by the mufti, and then one by the Mahommedan mayor, whom the Turkish authorities had placed at the head of this community, though it is three-quarters Christian, and whom the Greeks had continued in office. The address breathed an uncompromising loyalty, and was greeted with applause by the whole assembly.

The programme for the afternoon included a visit to a dervish monastery near the town. The Crown Prince told me about the excursion to-day. "The inmates of the convent," he said, "are schismatical Bektashi, who worship the prophet Elias. Their chief carries on his girdle a huge button of cut crystal, which came, according to him, from the trappings of Elias' horse. The monks, to

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judge from their splendid cellar, are Epicureans. They are beggars who carry, on their excursions into the countryside, a buffalo-horn, the blasts of which announce their coming and act as a signal for alms to be got ready. They have urgently requested Greek protection, like their more orthodox Mahommedan brothers. Now that there is no more question of the return of Turkish rule, and the only problem raised is that of subjection to the Northern Albanians, it appears that the entire Mahommedan section of the community regards the Albanian solution with intense horror. They know they would be robbed and held to ransom, so they come to us, moved by the very natural desire for protection and security."

Everyone at Koritza whom I was able to question gave the same answer. Under the Turkish régime they achieved a certain prosperity owing to their numbers and their superior commercial aptitude ;

Impressions of the Crown Prince

attached to Albania, Koritza would be deserted by its inhabitants, for the Greeks would prefer emigration to life under Albanian rule. Now Koritza is the commercial centre to which come all the villagers within a radius of twelve miles. It has direct communication via Liaskoviki with the great valley of the Voyusa. Yesterday was market day at Koritza, and in the afternoon when I left the town ahead of the Crown Prince to go to Liaskoviki we were constantly compelled to slacken our pace owing to the strings of donkeys, horses and mules returning to the villages.

LIASKOVIKI

A MAGNIFICENT view greets the traveller who emerges into the valley of the Voyusa, north of Liaskoviki. The snowy chain of Nemestzka towers along the horizon. In the nearer distance the high hills are like pieces of green embroidery, and the pearls, tiny villages about which winding paths and tracks make a setting of pink and red arabesques, the whole bidding the traveller halt and silently survey the scene. Liaskoviki, which is built on a rocky eminence in the middle of this panorama, was completing its decorations when I arrived, and this morning, at least two hours before the arrival of the Prince, the entire population without exception was crowding round the tri-

Liaskoviki

umphal arches at the entry to the straggling hamlet. On the right of the road were the orthodox clergy, on the left the Mahommedan, the first in green, red, or yellow chasubles, the effect of which was enhanced by gold embroidery. Their chief carried on his breast the Gospels in a binding of purple velvet with old silver ornaments.

The dignified forms of the Mahomme-dans were draped in long robes of black, green, or white. The schismatic Bektashis were there too, and upon one majestic waist I noticed the famous crystal button that came from Elias' appointments, the one which had caught the Prince's eye at the neighbouring convent of Koritza. If all the chief Bektashis of the East possess this relic, Elias' charger must have looked like a glass chandelier. About midday the speedy arrival of the Prince's carriage was signalled from the top of the pass by a sentinel with a flag. Enthusiastic cheers greeted him as soon

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as he set foot on the ground. The young Prince kissed the Gospels, listened to the addresses delivered in Greek and Turkish, and then walked towards the first houses of the village. The enthusiasm became delirious. Armfuls of flowers were thrown on to him and in front of him from the slopes above. The front rows of the crowd, both men and women, broke through the line of troops and threw themselves upon the Crown Prince, kneeling in the dust to kiss his feet, his knees, his sword and his hands. The officers had to interfere to free him, but a few paces further on the same wild and impassioned scene was repeated, a thing that no one could imagine who had not seen it.

A little later, when I spoke to the Prince, he confessed to me that though much the same thing had happened at Koritza, he had not become accustomed to it, but was deeply vexed and upset at these signs of adoration. "Nothing," he said, "quite comes up to the old

Liaskoviki

Mussulman whom we met on reaching the open country after leaving Colonia. He stood on the road, right in our way, and as the car had to stop so as not to run over him, he made a dash at me, and touching my cap, my shoulders and my breast, called down blessings upon me."

The welcome at Liaskoviki will be one of the Prince's most delightful recollections, for the decoration of the little town was in the most charming taste. In the quarter visible from the road, the inhabitants had covered the roofs with carpets, for the most part red and yellow, and the triumphal route to the prefecture was for six hundred yards entirely covered with branches of evergreen, a fresh and cheerful tapestry, the gift of poverty inspired by love.

KONITZA

WITHOUT constantly repeating the same story, it is impossible to describe the feelings displayed throughout all this country of Greek Epirus. What a pity it is that a few Austrian journalists did not think of accompanying the Crown Prince on his journey! They would surely have been compelled to see the truth and utter it. The Greek exchequer is not rich enough to buy so much enthusiasm to order, and though intimidation might produce external respect, it could never succeed in arousing the demonstrations which I witness every day. What is more, the Mahommedan minority, which is asserted to be Albanian, must then have been guilty of contemptible hypocrisy. When I went

Konitza

through Delvino the Mahommedans held aloof and did not come to see me : their consciences were ill at ease on account of certain misdeeds committed against the Greek peasants of the neighbouring plain. I was not displeased that they should hold aloof, though under different circumstances their action might have made me doubt the sentiments expressed elsewhere.

At Liaskoviki the Albanian beys, that is the rich men with fortunes of anything from £4,000 to £80,000, showed as great enthusiasm as any round the Prince. In any case, twenty out of thirty of them have estates in Thessaly, *i.e.*, in Greece proper.

We arrived at Konitza at five in the afternoon. Here there are 3,000 Greeks in a population of 4,000. Konitza lies at the foot of a great and lofty mountain. The town, in steeply rising tiers, extends along the last foot-hill, which dies away into the plain of the Voyusa. The scenery

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is Alpine in character. High mountains with many summits tower above the short valley. The Voyusa rushes out of a wild and narrow gorge, and a little bridge of audacious construction, shaped like the asses' bridge in Euclid, serves to link the two banks of the torrent and allows the mountain-folk access to Konitza without the long detour made by the road from Liaskoviki to Yanina. The crowd had collected under the planes at the bottom of the town. The bishop, in a bulging mitre with gold pendants standing out against his purple head-dress, was at the head of his clergy. These held tapers crossing each other like the supports of a tripod and tied round with blue favours in honour of the young Prince. The road which we had to follow from the lower end of the town to the cathedral, was marked by carpets which the inhabitants had specially brought out from their houses. In front of every door was a sort of altar. A table was

Konitza

spread with the best white linen, and on it, surrounded by flower vases and wreaths as with a frame, was a portrait of the King, of Venizelos, or some other of the popular heroes who personify the victories of Greece. It was a triumphal way such as I have never seen. As the Prince went by, flowers were thrown from the balconies and young girls in the front rows of the crowd sprinkled him with jasmine and rose water.

As I came out of the cathedral after the thanksgiving service, someone stopped me and said: "Are you not M. René Puaux, of the *Temps*?" On my answering that I was, he bade me wait a moment. He made a sign and at once the crowd broke into the "Marseillaise," rendering it with fervour and clear enunciation. Here, as elsewhere in this tortured country, France is regarded as the protectress, the one nation which can give liberty to the oppressed. As I expressed my thanks, cheers broke out,

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and I fled to my host's house, accompanied by my kind interpreter, the schoolmaster Papas, who had been educated in our French schools at Beyrut. My host is a doctor and he talked to me of the prospects offered by his profession in Epirus, a poverty-stricken country, where the fee for a visit is two francs, and where, in the one little town of Konitza, he has to face the competition of four colleagues. He invited me to dinner *en famille*, and according to the Eastern custom, his sister and his mother served the meal without sharing it. They would have liked to see me take a second helping of every dish, and put down an enormous plate of yaurt on which "Vive la France" was written in powdered cinnamon. Evening came; a torch-light procession promenaded the town and rifle shots rang out. The gaiety was universal.

PREMETI

FROM the bridge of the Voyusa, which is the key to all these valleys, those of Konitza, Yanina and Premeti, we have arrived at this last town. The reception has been of the same triumphal character. As elsewhere, the Mahommedans, as well as the Greeks, have assured the Crown Prince of their unanimous wish to become Greek subjects ; as elsewhere there have been ceremonies in the church and in the mosque ; as elsewhere, we have been deafened by persistent cheers for Greece, the Union, King Constantine and the Crown Prince. Among other quaint incidents were an excited address from a woman who must have had the mind and character of a suffragette, the wild enthusiasm of another

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toothless old dame from whom the Prince escaped with difficulty, and the Greek Anthem accompanied by instrumentalists wearing red fezzes and therefore obviously Mahommedans.

YANINA

I LEFT the Prince at Premeti, preceding him to Yanina by twenty-four hours. After four days' absence, I found the town completely transformed. Massive arches have been put up, decorated with Turkish rifles and flanked by captured guns. The people have brought out quantities of flags and masses of green-stuff to add to the decorations. The capital of Epirus is stirred to the bottom by a feverish excitement, though usually its quiet nights are disturbed only by the croaking of the thousands of frogs in the lake. Here the Greeks have always been in a great majority, and the rejoicings are on a scale proportionate to the importance of the town. However, I am rather tired of describing fêtes.

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I went for a chat with our vice-consul, M. Dussap, and his charming wife, who writes under the name of Guy Chantepleure. I listened to the stories both had to tell of the siege of Yanina, and went to see the site of the gallows on which the Turks used to hang Greeks, the place which M. Bilinski chose to be photographed in with his wife and his vice-consul. I was taken to the open-air café on the outskirts, the fashionable resort of Yanina, under the shade of a gigantic tree, and from the hotel balcony I saw the Crown Prince arrive amid the applause of the populace. Then I packed up.

YANINA TO METZOVO

WE left Yanina at six in the morning, and as we crossed the lake our oarsmen were assisted by a light breeze which vouchsafed to fill the sail. We reached the far shore at seven-thirty, just as the guns in Yanina began to fire a salute on the Prince's departure for Argyrocastro. Our guide, the head muleteer, Costa, loaded our beasts, and the little caravan moved off, the vicar-general of Metzovo in the van with his vicarial hat in a tin box flapping against his steed's hind-quarters. The road is deadly long and tedious, twelve hours on horseback and all at the walk. It is a real smuggler's track. Twenty times you have to cross torrents with water girth-high, and of Ali Pasha's paved road nothing is

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left except a rocky skeleton, of which the rain has denuded the jags, much as dogs expose the vertebrae of a corpse. Without the excellent Costa we should never have kept to the track. It seemed a disgrace that the chief route of communication between Thessaly and Epirus should have been left by the Turks in such a condition. It is true that their opposition to its repair was dictated by a deliberate policy, the more effective separation of the Thessalian Greeks from their brothers in Epirus. However, that did not stop the Greek force from Kalabaka from advancing along this line and coming in sight of the lake of Yanina, where its eager progress was stopped by the bloody combat of Drysko.

We reached Metzovo at nightfall. Some notables were waiting for us at the entry to the town, and it appeared that all the afternoon the school-children had stood on the road with flowers and the French flag. The house where I was entertained soon

Yanina to Metzovo

became the seat of an imposing gathering. A little girl in blue, whose first name was Angelica, offered me a bunch of daffodils, a second in white, called Antigone, presented the jam and the water, while a young Calypso, entirely clad in red, handed me cigarettes. As I smoked, I chatted with my hosts, many of whom spoke good French, in particular a school-mistress who had spent two years in Paris with her brother, a medical student.

The population of Metzovo, at one time as large as 7,500, has dwindled under Turkish rule. Now its sons are coming back gradually. One of them, now dead, will never see his native soil again. I mean, George Averof, the Greek multi-millionaire who gave Athens her famous stadium and gave Greece the warship which bears his name. Though he exiled himself, he did not forget Metzovo, and endowed his birthplace with a splendid school, where, the day after my arrival, I was received to the strains of the "Mar-

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seillaise " exceptionally well sung. After it, a young master read an address ending in the following tribute to France :

" To instruct the children in our school in the love of their friend and protectress, France, whose shield has always been over us ; to teach them gratitude for the benefits and services offered by you to our mother, Greece : this is our bounden duty."

This focus of the national spirit, the gift of George Averof, was established through an intermediary appointed to evade the interfering strictness of the Turkish administration.

Metzovo is a small town with a municipal fortune of £100,000, all given by its sons who have grown rich in foreign countries and invested at the National Bank of Athens for the duration of Turkish rule. Now that the yoke is shaken off, Metzovo will soon have this money at its disposal, and her citizens enjoy making fine plans for the future. " Here," they

Yanina to Metzovo

say, " will be Liberty Square ; there, the public garden with shady retreats for the summer. We shall continue the high road and carry it over the Zagoria chain. When you come back, you won't recognize Metzovo." There is something touching in these gifts. For years past they have been coming in from lovers of their country, most of whom are now dead, and who have never doubted that at last their sons or their grandsons would hear the hour of freedom strike. Such cases are common in Epirus, but Metzovo affords the most perfect example.

The town offered another interest to entertain my curiosity. Should I discover at last those much talked-of Kutzo-Vlachs, traces of whom I had sought in vain everywhere that their existence was reported ?

The first Kutzo-Vlach whom I had met was my own Costa, excellent fellow. As we passed by Vutonosi and the villagers across the river fired salvos in our honour,

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Costa borrowed the rifle from the gendarme who escorted us and emptied the magazine into the air, shouting "Zito Hellada." Except for his Greco-Vlach patois, I should never have guessed that he was in any way different from his Epirote companions. I questioned the schoolmistress and the schoolmaster at Metzovo on this subject. "I have 250 pupils," said the former. "We have 200 boys," said the latter. "The children of Kutzo-Vlach origin and the pure Greeks are absolutely indistinguishable. There is no Kutzo-Vlach school; no one has ever even dreamt of the possibility of establishing one, for in all the town we have never known more than three persons who professed Kutzo-Vlach nationality. What is more, they were three brothers returned from Rumania, whither they had been attracted by university scholarships. So little confidence has inspired their propaganda that it has not got beyond the most rudimentary stage.

Yanina to Metzovo

We only speak of these three isolated persons because you put the question. Otherwise, we should never have thought it incumbent on us to mention them. Besides, what is the meaning of this Rumanian propaganda, only a couple of paces from the Greek frontier, in the country of George Averof ? ”

And I could not but agree with them, as I quitted Metzovo, saluted in Greek by gay shouts of “ Hora Kale ” (“ Good luck ”) from the whole populace, among whom I was absolutely unable to distinguish Greek from Kutzo-Vlach. And as I set out towards the pass of Zigo, among the pines of Mount Pindus, and descended again to the valleys of Thessaly, I felt that during the whole journey from Santi Quaranta to Kalabaka I had never been anywhere but in Greece.

TO THE PLAIN OF THESSALY

Kalabaka, May 24th.

SEVEN-THIRTY P.M. The Khan of Trypa. For the last five hours we had followed the downward course of the Malakassi river under pouring rain. The Khan had a deserted air, and it required the shouts of our muleteers to make two heads pop out of a low door. "Get some wood and light a fire. The gentlemen are cold," ordered the leader of the caravan. We climbed up a creaking stair to a kind of attic which was to be our lodging, and not a very inviting one. The walls were badly whitewashed, and in the ceiling and floor we suspected legions of bugs. At last a fire gleamed on the hearth, and we began to dry our things systematically, next sprinkling with

To the Plain of Thessaly

Keating's the mat and sheep-skin on which we were to sleep. Two pots of jam, half a loaf of bread and the dregs of a bottle of Macedonian muscatel were our meal, and it was soon over. From below came the murmur of voices. All very much in the style of Paul Louis Courier, this forced halt at a villainous inn in a deserted valley.

4.30 a.m. It was not hard to wake up. Dawn was beginning to break, and the cold of early morning penetrated the cracks of the wooden windows. Besides, other insects—horrible little monsters, against which Keating's was ineffective—had begun to attack us. There was nothing to do but get out of the poverty-stricken place, where, no doubt, we shall be the last European guests, since work is already actively going on on the road along the other side of the valley. It is a fine carriageable road, which will join the railway terminus at Kalabaka to Metzovo across the Zagoria chain. The

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sheep-skin on which I had slept so badly was put back on the pack saddle of my mule, and we resumed our way beneath a fine rain fresh with all the freshness of morning. At this time of day the valley is delightful. From the bushes comes the odour of damp verdure, and under the tall plane groves sound at intervals the voices of the cuckoo and the "shepherd bird." One of our muleteers told us a folk-story of this last bird.

"Once upon a time there was a shepherd who went to sleep and slept three days and three nights. When he woke up, his flock had vanished. He sought it in vain over the mountains. Then the wolves came and said, 'We know where your flock is. Promise to let us take a few lambs, and we will tell you where to look.' The shepherd promised. But when he came to his flock, his dog reproached him for making so horrible a bargain, and, as a punishment, left him. The wolves came to claim their due, and

To the Plain of Thessaly

the shepherd whistled to his dog to help him in defending the lambs. But the dog never came back, and, ever since, the shepherd, turned into a bird, whistles without ceasing for his dog. Listen; that is exactly how the shepherds about here call their dogs."

Listening to this story and the song of the bird, I recalled another delightful piece of Epirote folk-lore which I had come across in connection with the nightingale. The nightingale one spring found a thick bush in which to pass the night. But when he awoke, the flowers had opened and he was a prisoner in the bush. Ever since then the nightingale distrusts bushes, and sings all night so that he may not yield to temptation.

As we approached a little grove of planes, we heard a regular concert of childish voices. It was not an open-air school, as my companion supposed, but a caravan of shepherds with their families and household goods on their way to the

The Sorrows of Epirus

hills, the old Turkish territory where, before the war of liberation a few months ago, no one ventured to go. The scene would have tempted an artist. In front went some mares and their foals; then the pack animals piled up with pyramids of objects of all shapes and sizes, from the middle of which stuck out the head of a fat infant, whose body was invisible, corded up in a mass of rugs. The babies on the mules held cats or cocks in their arms, or a couple of fowls tied together by the feet and flapping and struggling till they looked like a Valkyrie helmet come to life on the child's head. Women with bare feet carried long wooden cradles with tiny babies inside, and drew the thread off their distaffs as they walked along. The men shouted, "Shu, shu, shu," to urge on their beasts, and two large dogs, with powerful jaws and grey and white coats, trotted beside the caravan and stopped beside a torrent for fear of wetting their paws.

To the Plain of Thessaly

As we descended the valley towards the great plain of Thessaly, it offered more and more signs of the nearness of civilization. Cornfields became frequent, and flocks and herds abounded. Beside the path, in little niches in the rock, were icons, honeycombed by the weather, which await the passer-by, who crosses himself and drops his alms in a little money-box under the common protection of all travellers.

At the Khan of the "Fair Fountain," the hostess began to bring out all her crockery, big glasses for the fresh water of her spring, little glasses for mastikha, and tiny cups for coffee. The rain had stopped. On the bastions of Pindus, long fleecy wreaths of morning vapour slowly rose, displaying in sudden glimpses the sloping summits covered by snow during the night.

THE METEORA

ABOUT two hours before reaching Kalabaka, the Meteora rocks became visible. These summits, with tops like the Dreizinnen as seen from Misurina, are the guardians of the plain, standing at the end of the mountainous valley. There is some presumption in pretending to discover the Meteora, one of the curiosities, even one of the wonders of the world. But surely it is the heritage of successive generations to discover again with indefatigable perseverance everything that has been extolled by their predecessors. Some dreadful cataclysm of prehistoric days must have poured an irresistible torrent on to this mountain mass to wash away all the soil and leave

The Meteora

bare its rocky sub-structure. At the present day, the Meteora are formidable cliffs with vertical walls, honeycombed as though to give a lodging to gulls and seaweeds. On top of these natural towers, apparently inaccessible though they are, dwellings have been constructed by the indomitability of mankind. If they were feudal castles instead of humble monasteries, they might be the realization of Victor Hugo's vivid phantasies or certain amazing pictures by Gustave Doré.

Two villages squat at their feet, Kastraki and Kalabaka. Above the former, stands sentinel a giant who, from a distance, recalls one or other of the twin colossi of Memnon. In it one recognizes, twenty times enlarged, the knees of the god whom ancient Egypt set in the Nile valley to inspire an immense and awful reverence in those whose way led them to the tombs of the kings.

The little houses of Kalabaka lie among gigantic boulders, like an incrustation of

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shells upon an ocean reef, and one wants the sure foot of an expert Alpine climber to ascend to the old cathedral of the Emperor Andronicus Palæologus, and from it to the *col*, which gives access to the Meteora. "Gives access" is, perhaps, hardly the phrase, since to reach them one must still undergo either the test of the ladder or that of the net. The ladders are for the most part practically vertical. They require a head that knows not dizziness, an unquestioning faith in their solidity, and the fist of a sailor. The net demands an ingenuous confidence in the rope by which it is hauled up.

The shouts of the native who accompanied us finally brought an answer from the monks of Agia Triadha, and soon, from the wooden balcony which overhung the gulf, I saw descend a large cord net, like those which marketers fill with vegetables. It was hung on a huge iron hook at the end of a rope, and on reaching the earth was opened to admit me seated

The Meteora

cross-legged. The loops were drawn together above my head, passed over the hook, and—"Haul away"—my ascent began. For the first minute it is better to close one's eyes, because the net spins like a top, a movement which is extremely unpleasant. Afterwards it is better to open one's eyes, because, as it swings, the net comes from time to time into somewhat rude contact with the rocky wall. Chance brought me to the top back foremost. I felt hands grip the net and draw it inside. Someone gave an order, the rope was slackened, and I found myself sitting on the ground with five monks standing round, who welcomed me as I emerged from the net. A powerful winch had been responsible for my gradual elevation.

Arriving at the "Holy Trinity," I felt the illusion that I was calling on a little congregation of Simeon Stylites, all under vow after admission to the monastery never again to descend among human

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frailties. This illusion took wings at my first question. The monks of "Holy Trinity," like those of Barlaam and St. Stephen, are often in Kalabaka. Some of them have only thought it incumbent to show loyalty to their religious refuge by being buried there. I was shown a large crack in the rock where a few mountain plants had managed to take root, and where some bits of wood marked the last resting-place of these monks.

Among the living who received me, I found no trace of any poetic sentiment responding to the wonderful situation of this monastery. In any case, the lower Orthodox clergy is recruited from so inferior a class that anything else must have surprised me. They are old servants, old gendarmes, who feel some fine day filled with a vocation for the contemplative life. I should have wished to find there a little community of thinkers, of the disillusioned, who had lost every-

The Meteora

thing but the taste for their fraternal solitude and who would sit at twilight on this summit which towers over the valley to see one more day die away over the earth.

Perhaps in the case of these monasteries, as with so many of the things of this world, it is better to be satisfied with looking at them from below.

THE CORFU CHANNEL

Athens, May 28th.

ON arriving at Athens I got at last some French newspapers, of which I have been deprived for the last three weeks. By reading them I have been brought to revert to certain points which I have only partially touched upon in my letters and telegrams, considering them too obvious to give rise to serious difference of opinion.

In the *Temps* of May 18th our correspondent at Rome summarized the views of an Italian political personage, one of those best able to inform him on the attitude of Italian official circles towards the question of the Corfu channel. This gentleman is made to say: "The configuration of the channel between Corfu

The Corfu Channel

and the mainland makes it the most magnificent sheltered anchorage in the Mediterranean.”

Now chance has put me in a position to prove the contrary. On May 7th last, a storm broke over the Ionian sea. Not only was no vessel able to leave Corfu to risk the passage through the northern strait, but in the harbour of Corfu itself, the safest place in all this magnificent *sheltered* roadstead, the picket-boats of the English cruiser *Medea* could not leave the ship, nor could those which were at the quay return. So much for the safety of the anchorage.

As to the northern strait, through which I have passed in each direction, every sailor knows that about a mile from the coast of Corfu it is barred by a series of reefs, upon which stands a lighthouse. The passage between these reefs and the island is only practicable for vessels of shallow draught. The larger vessels, including the Austrian “Lloyd,” must hug

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the coast of Epirus. The geographical configuration of the strait thus makes the passage so narrow and dangerous that to be master of it there is no necessity to hold the coast of Epirus and build fortifications upon it. Mines in the channel would forbid both entrance and egress.

Unless Italy asks to be entrusted with the construction, on behalf of Albania, of forts upon the coast which she claims for that kingdom, it is hard to imagine a principality, offspring of the will of the six great Powers and under their joint protection, taking such a resolution, of which the only object would be to confer upon one group of these protecting Powers a strategic advantage as against the other. Reason, then, would leave the Epirote coast in the latitude of the northern strait as it is at present. If it becomes Albanian, it is impossible to allow fortifications obviously directed against certain great Powers ; whereas, if it becomes Greek, Greece is committed in advance to an

The Corfu Channel

undertaking to neutralize the whole zone.

To follow this train of argument further, the naval interests of Italy lie rather in accepting Greece's two proposals :

(1) The neutralization of the coastal zone and the Corfu channel ;

(2) The subjection of its neutral character to international control.

This safeguards Italy better than any insistence upon the mere territorial extension of Albania towards the south, where it would be impossible to construct a chain of defensive fortifications, the establishment of which would profit not universal peace, nor the balance of power, but one group of Powers against the other.

Besides, since international treaties have dismantled Corfu and forbidden all military works there, it would be an impossible breach of reciprocity to let the island be threatened by Albanian guns. Therefore, in a military sense, this coast can only remain in *statu quo*. Whether poli-

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tically it be Greek or Albanian makes no difference to the laying of mines by warships in the northern strait, and it will take more than a few snipers hidden among the brushwood of this precipitous coast to prevent the passage of battleships and torpedo craft of any nation. Neutralization under international control, as with the navigation of the Danube, offers Italy a far more effective guarantee than the mere word "Albania" printed across a map.

Moreover, as I said at the beginning, the Corfu channel is the most insecure shelter that a fleet could choose. When England ceded Corfu to Greece in 1863, surely the Admiralty which has a certain reputation would have advised against the gift if it had possessed strategic value.

The Italian memorandum on the strategic importance of the Corfu channel goes so far as to call as evidence Queen Teuta of Illyria, who used Corfu as the base of her operations in 230 B.C. There

The Corfu Channel

must indeed be a shortage of arguments if it is necessary to go back to the days of galleys, or even of Napoleon's three-deckers! After all, the speed of dread-noughts and high-sea torpedo craft does involve some modification of naval strategy, and looking at this same map of the Ionian Sea which our Rome correspondent's informant showed him, we see only a few hours' steaming further from the channel of Otranto such anchorages as those of Argostoli (Cephalonia) and Astakos (Acarnania), in which the British Mediterranean squadron constantly appears, though it never manœuvres in the Corfu channel.

Greek statesmen cannot forget that only after Italy had declared the bay and town of Valona alone to concern her, did she raise the question of the Corfu channel, the importance of which could be no sudden discovery if it has been obvious since the days of Queen Teuta.

It is impossible for them to avoid the

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suspicion that, in spite of all assertions to the contrary and all protestations that the question of the Corfu channel involves no territorial interests, it has only been invented as a last resource, disguised behind a bewildering mask of high naval problems, to secure the aggrandizement of the principality of Albania, which thus remaining "nobody's child" might one day, so far as the southern part is concerned, be adopted by Italy.

The Greeks ask how, if Italy really has at heart the happiness of the races who inhabit Epirus, she can refuse them the free choice of the nationality to which they will belong in order to impose on them a Swiss cantonal system. Switzerland can maintain the confederation as a living thing owing to the unity of thought and idea which pervades it and to the ripe wisdom shown by its governments through centuries of experience. In Albania, which is characterized by a tradition of rebellion against authority, and

The Corfu Channel

whose component races regard each other with a deadly hatred, no Federal Council could establish even the ghost of administrative authority. To attempt it would be to attempt the impossible, seeing that the Greek population of Epirus has received the Greek Army with enthusiasm, that many of its sons enlisted in it as their liberator, and that all the demonstrations which I witnessed had for their *leitmotif* "Long live our King, Constantine! Union or Death." One need only cross Epirus to realize that these people mean what they say.

I have traversed the whole of this country, which the imperialist dreams of Italy wish to separate from Greece, to which everything binds her—language, tradition, religion, education, and even centuries of martyrdom for their country's sake. As I leave to return to France, after listening to the story of so much suffering, after seeing before my eyes the strength of a patriotism which nothing

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has ever discouraged, I understand the boy who, on the morning of the surrender of Bisani, as the first Evzoni appeared at St. John's, ran to the cemetery and, as he fired his revolver above his father's grave—the father whose legacy had been the hope of a freedom which he himself had not lived to see—cried aloud : “ Father, Father, the Greeks have come ! ”

THE END

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